

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Examiner is also thanked for indicating that claims 3-7 and 9 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitation of the base claims and any intervening claims. The Office Action dated January 2, 2008, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

Claims 1 and 8 are hereby amended. The subject matter of allowable claim 9 is now incorporated into independent claims 1 and 8. Claim 9 is hereby canceled. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, claims 1-8 and 10-23 are currently pending. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

The Office rejected claims 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over French Patent No. 2,708,006 (hereinafter the “‘006 Patent”). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Nevertheless, in order to advance the application to allowance, Applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 8 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 9.

The Office cites the ‘006 Patent in its 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of independent claim 8. The Office additionally explains that claim 9, which depends directly from independent claim 8, would be allowable if written in independent form. Hence, the Office essentially states that, in view of all previously cited art, the ‘006 Patent fails to teach or suggest, at least, “a first conduit connected to the detergent reservoir, wherein the first water supply valve controls water flow through the first conduit and the detergent reservoir; and a second conduit connected to the bleaching agent reservoir, wherein the second water supply valve controls water flow through the second conduit and the bleaching agent and the fabric softener reservoirs” as recited in claim 9.

Applicant has amended independent claims 1 and 8 to incorporate the subject matter of allowable claim 9. Specifically, both claims now recite, among other things, “a first conduit connected to the detergent reservoir, wherein the first water supply valve controls water flow through the first conduit and the detergent reservoir; and a second conduit connected to the bleaching agent reservoir, wherein the second water supply valve controls water flow through the second conduit and the bleaching agent and the fabric softener reservoirs” as recited in claim 9. The ‘006 Patent fails to teach or suggest at least these elements, as noted above. As such, claims 1 and 8 are allowable over the ‘006 Patent. Claims 2 and 10, 11, and 15, which depend from independent claims 1 and 8, respectively, are also allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 1 and 8.

Applicant, therefore, respectfully requests withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claims 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, and 15.

The Office rejected claims 12-14 and 16-23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘006 Patent in view of German Patent No. 101 16 832 (hereafter the “‘832 Patent”). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

As discussed, independent claim 1 is allowable over the ‘006 Patent. The ‘832 Patent fails to cure the deficiency in the ‘006 Patent. In fact, the ‘832 Patent is cited for allegedly disclosing the connections of claims 12-14 and 16-23. Applicant does not necessarily agree with the Office’s allegation. Nevertheless, to advance the application to allowance, Applicant respectfully states that claims 12-14 and 16-23 are allowable over the ‘006 Patent in view of the ‘832 Patent, at least in view of the direct or indirect dependency of those claims from allowable independent claim 1. Accordingly, regardless of the alleged teachings of the ‘832 Patent, claims 12-14 and 16-23, by virtue of their dependence on allowable claim 1, are allowable over the

combined teaching of the '006 Patent and the '832 Patent. Applicant, therefore, respectfully requests withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of claims 12-14 and 16-23.

CONCLUSION

The application is in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

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Respectfully submitted,

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